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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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The average strength of these units, based on the 22 groups for which personnel complements are known, is 496, suggesting that as many as 17,000 troops are involved. This continuing high rate of infiltration from the North is significant because bad weather beginning in May in the Laotian infiltration corridor normally slows troop movements.

2. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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Some of the groups [REDACTED] have had fewer than 200 personnel, lowering the average strength of this month's infiltration groups to well below a norm of 586 since the first of this year.

[REDACTED]

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3. [REDACTED]

EO 12958  
3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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4. [REDACTED] the number of infiltrators [REDACTED] moving south in North Vietnam this year is estimated to be in excess of 100,000.

[REDACTED] the actual number deploying since the first of the year may be substantially higher. How much higher is unknown at present.

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23 May 1968

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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III-1

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5. The evidence in support of the theory that more than 100,000 have already deployed from the North in 1968 is to be found in [REDACTED] captured documents, and prisoner interrogations. First is the movement of the 304th and 320th divisions into South Vietnam by January of this year. These units, totaling 16-20,000 troops, were not included in the estimate of 100,000 [REDACTED]

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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6. [REDACTED] the 177 infiltration groups [REDACTED] probably do not include all the groups which have moved during the past four and a half months. Although they find it impossible at present to figure out how many are being missed while en route, they acknowledge that total deployments may be well in excess of current estimates.

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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7. This impression is supported by the prisoners who have supplied infiltration group numbers [REDACTED]

EO 12958  
3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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8. MACV notes that since 1 February 1968 it has learned of the existence of 218 infiltration groups-- [REDACTED]

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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9. There is no solid indication that North Vietnam is depleting its strategic reserve of trained combat personnel in order to keep up the present high level of infiltration. Most of the major North Vietnamese units still assigned to the defense of the homeland show no signs of moving from the North at this time. Rather it appears that the current wave of infiltrating personnel is comprised largely of draftees, reserves, and an unknown number of labor personnel.

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
(C)

III-2

23 May 1968

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10. Evidence is growing that North Vietnam is drawing heavily on "second echelon" manpower in order to carry on infiltration to the south. Captives taken in recent engagements in South Vietnam contain an increasing proportion of young, ill-trained, poorly motivated, and physically unfit troops. It seems likely that persons previously exempt from service for reasons of health now are being taken.

11. It is possible that Hanoi has decided that all such individuals can make a contribution during a year when so much is at stake. Some of them could be used in support of the expanded logistic system required by the deployment of an unprecedented number of troops. Those who are assigned to combat units may be regarded as cannon fodder in keeping up the kind of military pressure the enemy hopes to maintain during the next few months.

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)>25Yrs  
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23 May 1968

III-3

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